

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 H-01 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:DKGUTHRIE/JLP

APPROVED BY ARA/PAN:JCHAAHR

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H:CCUTTER

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R 042319Z MAY 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 114429

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN, US, EWWT

SUBJECT: SENATE APPROVAL OF SEA-LEVEL CANAL STUDY

1. SENATE MAY 4 ADOPTED BY VOTE OF 63-29 AMENDMENT BY SEN. GRAVEL (D-ALASKA) TO WATERWAY USERS BILL (H.R. 8309) ESTABLISHING USG COMMISSION TO MAKE FEASIBILITY STUDY OF SEA-LEVEL CANAL.
2. "INTERNATIONAL SEA-LEVEL CANAL STUDY COMMISSION" WILL CONSIST OF THREE UNITED STATES AND THREE PANAMANIAN MEMBERS. THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, AND THE PRESIDENT WILL EACH APPOINT ONE U.S. MEMBER; AND THE PRESIDENT WILL IN ADDITION APPOINT THE PANAMANIAN MEMBERS UPON RECOMMENDATION BY THE GOP.
3. COMMISSION IS AUTHORIZED \$8 MILLION IN FUNDING. IT IS DIRECTED TO UPDATE 1971 ANDERSON COMMISSION STUDY, THROUGH ON-SITE SURVEYS IF NECESSARY. IT IS ALSO TO PREPARE
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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT. COMMISSION'S FINAL REPORT IS TO BE SUBMITTED WITHIN THREE YEARS OF ENACTMENT OF BILL.

4. PROVISION ADOPTED AT BEHEST OF SEN. ALLEN (D-ALA.) SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES U.S. MEMBERS OF COMMISSION TO SURVEY

ROUTES OUTSIDE PANAMA AND TO MAKE REPORT TO PRESIDENT

WITHIN ONE YEAR OF ENACTMENT OF BILL.

5. AMENDMENT MAKES NO REFERENCE TO PANAMA CANAL TREATY, ALTHOUGH GRAVEL STAFFER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT WAS ASSUMED TO BE CARRYING OUT PROVISION FOR JOINT STUDY IN ARTICLE 12 OF THAT TREATY.

6. GRAVEL FIRST PRESENTED AMENDMENT ON MAY 3, WHEN IT WAS DEFEATED 49-43. REVISED VERSION, INCLUDING SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO ROUTES OUTSIDE OF PANAMA, THEN PREPARED AND INTRODUCED FOLLOWING DAY.

7. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PANAMANIAN EMBASSY ADVISED AMENDMENT'S PROPONENTS PRIOR TO MAY 3 THAT GOP AND GENERAL TORRIJOS PERSONALLY SUPPORTED BILL.

8. FUTURE OF LEGISLATION IS UNCERTAIN. NEXT STEP FOR WATERWAYS BILL SHOULD BE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE, BUT IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER CONFERENCE WILL MEET IN NEAR FUTURE. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UPPER HOUSE, US CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE BILLS, STUDIES, CANALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE114429
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DKGUTHRIE/JLP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780191-0983
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780591/aaaadacl.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9aeacba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2788266
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SENATE APPROVAL OF SEA-LEVEL CANAL STUDY
TAGS: EWWT, PGOV, PN, US
To: PANAMA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9aeacba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014